

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**South Dakota School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2001-2002**

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Dates of On Site Visit: March 18 - 20, 2002

Date of Report: June 20, 2002

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Maintenance	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left not addressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? South Dakota Codified Law
- ? SD Administrative Rules for Special Education
- ? SDSBVI Mission Statement
- ? SDSBVI "Access to Quality" Strategic Plan
- ? Comprehensive plan

- ? Student file reviews
- ? Admissions requirements
- ? Eligibility guidelines
- ? Student IEPs
- ? Parental prior notices
- ? Correspondence with parents and LEAs
- ? Admissions committee review
- ? Task analysis of admissions process and admissions process form
- ? Faculty handbook
- ? Student and parent handbooks
- ? SIMS
- ? Annual reporting (DOE)
- ? NAC & NCA accreditation documents
- ? School improvement plan
- ? Job descriptions
- ? Personnel records
- ? Administrative team legal counsel support
- ? Disciplinary reports--Minutes of internal and external behavioral teams
- ? Instructors utilization of on-going IEP monitoring (i.e., charts, anecdotal remarks, observations)

Promising Practice

The steering committee identified as a promising practice that the school has careful and consistent hiring and evaluation processes to ensure they have well-qualified, experienced staff so students receive appropriate instruction. In addition, the steering committee identified that the school's administration knows where to access information about state and federal special education laws, as well as training opportunities. The committee also concluded the school provides ongoing staff development that supports school goals and student needs.

The steering committee concluded the SDSBVI ensures that policies and procedures are being followed for new placements and appropriate personnel are identified to assist each student seeking placement. In addition, the steering committee determined that a thorough effort is made to ensure appropriate placement decisions.

The steering committee identified the school has internal and external behavior teams that are used prior to any disciplinary interventions. These teams have been successful according to the steering committee because no students have been suspended or expelled.

Maintenance

The steering committee concluded that appropriate procedures are in place. The SDSBVI is constantly working to meet state performance standards and indicators. The steering committee concluded that data based decision-making procedures are used to determine progress towards state's performance goals and indicators. This allows students to transition to next programmatic step.

Needs Improvement

Because all SDSBVI students are on IEPs, the steering committee concluded that using a grade level is not the best indicator of a student's performance and progress.

Another area of need the steering committee identified was that the SDSBVI Advisory Council should focus on increasing opportunities for parent training.

Not Applicable

The steering committee concluded that the areas of child find, referral and students placed in private schools does not apply to the school. The SDSBVI receives students already identified from LEAs across the state; thus, they do not have a process for child find and referral.

Validation Results**Promising Practices**

Through interviews and file reviews, the compliance monitors agreed with the SDSBVI steering committee's conclusions pertaining to the success of disciplinary interventions. Documentation validated that no students have been suspended or expelled; therefore, the SDSBVI internal and external behavior teams used prior to disciplinary interventions have been successful. The review team was shown data that has been compiled for three years or more to validate that the SDSBVI implements data-based performance goals and indicators to determine each student's progress.

The monitoring team noted from documentation and interviews that the SDSBVI has quality hiring and staff development procedures. The SDSBVI recruits nationwide for all faculty and administration job openings. Careful and consistent hiring and evaluation processes ensure well-qualified SDSBVI staff. All new employees must participate in personnel orientation. The review team validated that the entire faculty is properly certified. Two-thirds of the faculty hold graduate degrees, ten of the eleven classroom teachers are certified in visually impaired and all the orientation and mobility instructors are COMS. As per state regulations, all staff responsible for dispensing medication has taken a medication training course.

The review team validated through interviews and documentation that SDSBVI ensures that all staff members participate in on-going staff development that supports the students' needs and school's goals. Appropriate personnel are identified to assist each student-seeking placement. In interviews, the review team determined an additional promising practice to be that eight faculty and staff members have received local, state, regional and/or national awards. In addition, the review team determined that the administration, faculty and support staff is evaluated annually.

In interviews, the review team validated that the SDSBVI Advisory Counsel currently is addressing increasing parent training. This was listed in the "Needs Improvement" section, but the compliance monitors perceived this as a promising practice.

SDSBVI's use of data-based performance goals and indicators was determined by the review team to be a promising practice. In addition, all staff members participating in staff development was a promising practice indicator.

The compliance monitors also found the SDSBVI outreach and transition planning services to districts throughout South Dakota to be a promising practice.

Maintenance

Through file reviews, interviews and survey information, the review team validated the SDSBVI steering committee's conclusion that appropriate procedures are in place and the administrators, faculty and staff are constantly working to meet performance standards and indicators. In addition, the monitors agreed that students are able to transition to the next programmatic step based on file reviews.

Areas That Need Improvement

The review team validated the steering committee's determination that grade-levels are not the best indicators of blind and visually impaired students' performance and progress and an alternative grading procedure is needed.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Student file reviews
- ? Student IEPs
- ? Disciplinary reports
- ? Minutes of internal and external behavioral teams
- ? Annual reporting (DOE)
- ? SD administrative rules for special education
- ? COHE contract
- ? Personnel policies
- ? Substitute policies
- ? Job descriptions
- ? Teacher certificates
- ? Personnel reports
- ? Staff evaluations
- ? Student and parent surveys
- ? Former student surveys
- ? Student/Parent handbook and outreach handbook
- ? SDSBVI multidisciplinary assessment report
- ? Administrative team with support from legal counsel
- ? Human resources development plan
- ? Tech task force minutes
- ? Advisory council minutes
- ? School improvement plan
- ? School philosophy

Maintenance

The steering committee identified policies and procedures that support all students and families are afforded FAPE. They found the administrative team knows how to access information about FAPE and that appropriate structures and supports are in place to ensure FAPE. The steering committee determined the school faculty and staff also have opportunities for professional development regarding any state or federal law FAPE revisions.

The steering committee found that the SDSBVI's comprehensive plan addresses policies and procedures for suspension and expulsion. In addition, the steering committee concluded that the internal and external behavior teams used prior to suspension or expulsion have been successful because no children have been suspended or expelled.

Not Applicable

The SDSBVI steering committee noted that no training has been provided for LEP students, because no LEP students are enrolled at the school.

Validation Results

Promising Practices

The review team validated the SDSBVI did have four areas that were promising practices. First, in interviews with administration and faculty, it was noted that the SDSBVI is consistently seeking funding to receive the most up to date technical equipment/devices to address their students' academic and assistive technology needs. Second, the SDSBVI administration team has experience accessing information and writing grants for academic programs to assist their students. Third, the adaptive PE curriculum is not limited to on-site activities. The SDSBVI utilizes resources in the community (i.e., SPURS therapeutic horseback riding, swimming) to assist in improving their students' motor skills. Finally, no students have been suspended or expelled because of the use of proactive disciplinary inventions.

Maintenance

The review team validated that all students and families are afforded FAPE through interviews, file reviews and survey data. It was found that appropriate policies, procedures, structures and supports are in place to ensure FAPE. All staff attended the Special Education Law in-service in August 2001. All student files reviewed by the team indicated that parents participated in the development of IEPs for their children either in person or via teleconference.

In addition, the review team validated through documentation and file reviews that the internal and external behavior teams strategies have proven successful, because no children have been suspended or expelled.

Because the administration team knows how to access information pertaining to special education laws and new academic technological equipment/devices for blind and visually impaired students, the review team concluded this to be a promising practice rather than maintenance.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input, conducts a comprehensive evaluation. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? SD Administrative rules for special education
- ? Comprehensive plan for special education

- ? OSE prior notice form
- ? Job descriptions that identify who sends out prior notices
- ? Completed prior notices in student files
- ? Contact notes
- ? Informed parents and “of age” students
- ? Faculty handbook
- ? Personnel files
- ? Human resources development plan
- ? Parental prior notices
- ? Students’ multidisciplinary evaluation reports
- ? Evaluation instrument manuals
- ? Strengths and needs Sheet
- ? Student IEPs
- ? Student’s evaluation schedules and reports sent home
- ? SDSBVI Life Skills parent questionnaire
- ? Request for evaluation information form
- ? Evaluations
- ? Pre-evaluation team minutes
- ? Classroom observations
- ? School philosophy

Promising Practices

The steering committee identified policies and procedures are in place to ensure comprehensive, well-documented evaluations. They determined the SDSBVI has a highly qualified evaluation team so students receive thorough evaluations. The steering committee concluded that comprehensive evaluations are based on a solid assessment foundation that identify a student’s strengths and needs, which leads to the development of appropriate IEPs. The steering committee was in consensus that students and parents are well served through the SDSBVI evaluation process.

Maintenance

Parental prior notices and contact notes were found in all student files; therefore, the steering committee concluded that the SDSBVI has good system for developing and checking prior notices to ensure children are reevaluated, as needed. The committee also found in the surveys that parents think they are well informed about upcoming evaluations.

The steering committee concluded that reevaluations are conducted at the SDSBVI according to state law and students are appropriately evaluated.

Areas that need improvement

An area needing improvement identified by the steering committee is to have all testing accommodations stated in reports, rather than indicating this on the test documents and during students’ IEP meetings.

Not Applicable

The steering committee found that the LEA conducts the initial student evaluation and no initial evaluations are completed at the SDSBVI.

Validation Results

Promising Practices

The review team agrees that evaluations completed by SDSBVI staff are comprehensive, completed by qualified staff, and lead to appropriate IEP development. Because these elements are required by state and federal regulations, they do not rise to the level of a promising practice

A promising practice that the review team validated through interviews and documentation was that all SDSBVI staff has experience evaluating children who are blind or visually impaired. In interviews, the review team learned that SDSBVI staff members attend state, regional and national conferences to improve their evaluation skills and share the information with their colleagues.

In addition, the compliance monitors found that the SDSBVI has developed a very comprehensive form for parent input into the evaluation, which helps the SDSBVI to gather a wealth of information from the parents about their child's strengths and difficulties.

Maintenance

In interviews and file reviews, the monitors validated that the SDSBVI conducts evaluations in accordance with the state and federal laws to ensure children are appropriately reevaluated. All the student evaluations were found to have been given by qualified personnel, were comprehensive and well documented. The review team noted that prior notices were developed in a manner that showed parents are well informed about their child's upcoming reevaluation.

Needs Improvement

The review team agreed that all accommodations in testing must be noted on the test protocols and in reports.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Student IEPs
- ? Comprehensive plan for special education
- ? SDSBVI handbooks
- ? Student and Parents handbooks
- ? Human Resources development plan
- ? Parental rights pamphlet
- ? Parent rights sheet
- ? Student file reviews
- ? Special education rights statement
- ? Release forms

- ? Contact records
- ? Prior notice forms
- ? Release of confidential information form
- ? Records retention and destruction plan
- ? Parent surveys

Promising Practices

The steering committee concluded that policies and procedures are in place to ensure confidentiality and provide parental access to their child's file documents. They found that student files are secured and logs are maintained. Also, the steering committee concluded that the faculty and administration understand their responsibilities for confidentiality and know that parents have full access to their child's records, as do students over age 18.

Maintenance

It was determined by the steering committee that faculty and administration understand and implement procedural safeguards. They found that parental rights are provided to all parents at least twice a year and rights are transferred to a student at the age of 18 unless guardianship is established. The steering committee concluded the SDSBVI complies with consent and written notice procedures.

The steering committee also noted that the SDSBVI's comprehensive plan and rights brochures have documentation that addresses procedures to handle complaints and request for due process.

Validation Results

Promising Practices

Based on interviews and documentation, the review team validated the SDSBVI findings that maintaining student logs and the comprehensive "Request for Evaluation Information" documents were promising practices.

Student files being secured, the faculty and administration's knowledge of policies and procedures and policies and procedures in place to ensure confidentiality were determined to be areas of maintenance by the review team.

Maintenance

Through interviews, file reviews and survey documentation, the review validated that the SDSBVI administrators and faculty understand the procedural safeguards regulations. The review team found that IEP information supported that parents rights, rights of transfer to a student at age 18 unless a guardian has been appointed, consent and written notice regulations are being implemented. In addition, procedures in the SDSBVI's comprehensive plan and parent rights booklets explain how to handle complaints and due process procedures.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? SDSBVI handbooks
- ? Parent rights handout
- ? Human Resources development plan
- ? Job descriptions
- ? Student IEPs
- ? Contact sheets
- ? Teacher surveys
- ? Administrative surveys
- ? Principal's checklist
- ? Strengths and needs sheet
- ? Student file reviews
- ? NASDSE guidelines for students with visual impairments
- ? Parent preparation for IEP form
- ? Expanded core curriculum
- ? Summary of student achievement
- ? Quarterly progress reports
- ? National longitudinal transition study II
- ? Project Skills

Promising Practices

The steering committee identified procedures that are in place and consistently followed to ensure student needs are addressed through the IEP. All actions are well documented in student files according to the steering committee; thus, it was determined that the administration and faculty understand the IEP process and participate in developing and implementing the IEP and assessing student progress.

The documentation also lead the steering committee to conclude that students and parents are active participants in development of a uniquely individualized IEP based on identified needs.

In addition, the committee concluded the SDSBVI transition program is well developed and highly collaborative.

Maintenance

The steering committee concluded the administrative staff monitors the IEP process so policies and procedures are followed and requirements are met. They found that the IEP format used consistently is appropriate, and the faculty annually writes goals and objectives to meet student needs. In addition, the steering committee noted the SDSBVI provides regular progress reports.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee concluded that the relationship of the student's visual impairment to present level of performance on page 2 of the IEP needs to be more clearly stated on each IEP.

Not Applicable

The steering committee determined that information about preschool programs and out-of-district placements did not apply to the SDSBVI.

Validation Results

Promising Practices

The review team agreed that the SDSBVI transition program is well developed and collaborative. The reviewers validated that student files, IEPs, staff interviews and survey information supported this as a promising practice. In interviews, the reviewers validated that the SDSBVI transition outreach program provides personal, individualized student services to LEAs.

The other promising practices identified by the steering committee are state and federal regulations; thus, the review team believes that they should be identified as maintenance areas.

Maintenance

The review team did not validate as a promising practice that procedures and policies are to be in place to ensure student needs are addressed on the IEP. State and federal regulation require this. It was noted the SDSBVI administration and faculty understand and follow these the procedures/policies. The team validated through file reviews that a student and his/her parents are required to be active participants in the development of the IEP. State and federal law states that the IEP team is responsible for developing accommodations to meet the student's unique needs, as well as implementing the IEP. All of these processes are areas of maintenance for SDSBVI.

Areas That Need Improvement

Upon review of the present levels of performance statements on IEPs, the review team agreed that the student's visual impairment and his/her present levels of performance need to be more specific to relate the skills the student has mastered and the skills he/she is having difficulty mastering.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan for special education
- ? NASDSE guidelines for the visually impaired
- ? Student IEPs
- ? SDSBVI placement report
- ? Enrollment information
- ? SIMS
- ? Human Resources development plan
- ? Multidisciplinary evaluation report
- ? Student schedules
- ? Curricula
- ? CBI policies
- ? Behavior Plans
- ? Student and Parent handbooks

? Student exit interviews

Promising practices

The steering committee identified that the process of enrollment includes three “stages” where the student’s least restrictive environment is evaluated: (1) at the LEA, (2) by SDSBVI Admission Team upon application, and (3) after 45 day evaluation by full IEP team, including LEA and parents.

In addition, the steering committee concluded the faculty and staff are well qualified to address the educational needs of student with visual impairments and understand least restrictive environment issues.

The steering committee identified that student IEPs and placements reflect the students’ least restrictive environment. They also found the students have considerable community access.

Not Applicable

The steering committee concluded that all SDSBVI classrooms are modified to meet individual needs. There is no distinction between “general education” and “special education”.

Validation Results

Promising practices

From staff and student interviews, file reviews and survey information the monitors validated that SDSBVI students have considerable opportunities to community access for transition.

The monitors conclude that the SDSBVI “three stage” enrollment process, faculty and staff knowledge of LRE issues and students IEP and placements reflecting LRE are maintenance areas.